*All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque

Section: Pages 1-50

*All Quiet on the Western Front* begins with the narrator speaking of a great meal and the happiness of the men he is stationed with. The narrator then goes into explaining that his Company had suffered heavy losses and now the Company is composed of only eighty men after being 150 men strong. The narrator then goes into describing his friends and comrades. The narrator and his comrades go to the infirmary to visit Kemmerich, a friend that has been critically injured in battle, resulting in an amputated leg. While visiting Kemmerich, Müller develops a fondness for Kemmerich’s boots. As time passed Kemmerich condition got worse. Before Kemmerich’s death one of his last wishes was to give Müller his boots. Throughout the section the narrator and his friends constantly go head to head with Corporal Himmelstoss, an officer of the Second Company. The narrator and his friends decide to get payback on Corporal Himmelstoss so one night they beat hidden by the dark of night.

Analysis:

I was a little surprised that Remarque did not start in the middle of an action sequence like much war based novels. I found this interesting because the reader gets to connect with the character early in the novel. The author begins the novel by jumping ahead in time. He later goes back to describe the previous events and describes the character that the narrator associates himself with. As the story progresses I am beginning to see the realities of death from war and how the perception of World War I is changing.

Application:

So far death has not made a huge impact on the characters in the novel or me as the reader. The novel does state that the Second Company has suffered heavy losses and the narrator’s friend Kemmerich has dies, but it does not seem to heavily impact the character in the story. I believe that soldiers are currently more patriotic and are just enjoying being relieved from fighting after battling the English. The narrator and his friends are all young adults and I do not think they know of the harsh realities of war just yet. Most of the men are fairly happy to be serving in a war with friends while also playing petty pranks with the higher ranking officers. As the story progress I believe that death will play a huge impact on the characters and ultimately change the morale of the men. While reading this section of the book I have not found an older aged character who steps up as a leader from previous experience in wars who guides the gang who of friends as they fight out World War I.